

Weapons and on Their Destruction, adopted by the Senate of the United States on April 24, 1997.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 14.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Reporting a Certification Required
by the Ratification Resolution of the
Chemical Weapons Convention**

January 13, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Chairman:)

In accordance with the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, adopted by the Senate of the United States on April 24, 1997, I hereby certify that:

In connection with Condition (9), Protection of Advanced Biotechnology, the legitimate commercial activities and interests of chemical, biotechnology, and pharmaceutical firms in the United States are not being significantly harmed by the limitations of the Convention on access to, and production of, those chemicals and toxins listed in Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 14.

**Remarks on Airline Safety and an
Exchange With Reporters**

January 14, 2000

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

The President. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I asked you here today so

I could make some remarks about airline safety. But in view of an item that was in the morning news, I would like to also say a few words about the efforts we're making to ensure prescription drug coverage for millions of our senior citizens and disabled Americans who rely on Medicare.

Last year I proposed a comprehensive plan to modernize Medicare to meet the challenges of the 21st century, to extend the life of the Trust Fund and add a much-needed voluntary option for prescription drug coverage. And as you know, there's been some considerable resistance up until now from both the drug companies and from some in Congress.

Today's news that the drug companies say they are ready to work with us on providing affordable optional drug coverage and making sure older people have access to the highest quality medications developed is a very good first step. Now, what we need is positive actions from the drug company and positive action in Congress, not just on the benefit but on the efforts to strengthen and extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund.

I hope that this is a good beginning of what can be a very good year for the American people.

Airline Safety

Now let me begin my remarks by welcoming and thanking the people who are here with me, beginning with our FAA Administrator, Jane Garvey; Deputy Secretary of Transportation Mort Downey; American Airlines Chairman Don Carty; Delta Airlines CEO Leo Mullen; first vice president of the Airline Pilots Association International, Captain Dennis Dolan; Allied Pilots Association President Richard LaVoy; and Mark DeAngelis, the Aviation Safety Action Program representative for the Transport Workers Union.

Three years ago I asked Vice President Gore to lead a Commission on Aviation Safety and Security, looking at how to make our skies as safe as they can possibly be. Already, there is less than one fatal crash for every one million commercial flights. But we know we can do better still. Any accident, any death in the air is still one too many.

The Commission set a goal of reducing fatal accidents by 80 percent over 10 years. Its members agreed that the best way to meet the goal was to stop accidents before they happen and identify problems before they have terrible consequences. This is a completely different way of looking at safety. It requires business, labor, and regulators to work together in a completely different way—as partners, not adversaries. Everyone must focus on fixing problems, not fixing blame.

I'm proud to be here with all these people today to announce a new partnership among business, labor, and Government to set us ahead of the curve on safety. Under aviation safety action programs, pilots will report problems or concerns immediately to safety experts at their airline and the Federal Aviation Administration. They'll be encouraged to share their valuable insights about doing the job more safely. They will be freed from the fear of being disciplined for admitting that something went wrong.

The FAA will still have the right to take action against deliberate violations of aviation rules, criminal activity, or drug and alcohol use. The experts will get the data they need to stay in front on safety, to solve problems, evaluate existing safety systems, and propose new ones.

We know these programs will work because American Airlines and its pilots have run one as a demonstration for more than 5 years now. Pilots reported literally thousands of concerns to the FAA. Those reports produced real improvements in procedures and in equipment. They even helped designers and builders create safer planes and airports.

For example, pilots' expertise changed the way some airports use lights and signs on the runways, and pilots helped to rewrite the safety checklist they must complete while planes taxi from the gate. And when American extended its program to mechanics and dispatchers, they improved equipment manuals and maintenance procedures.

I hope we'll be able to follow their example and open this program to all the people who make airplanes fly—flight attendants, mechanics, dispatchers. For the first time, we have regulators, business, and labor working

as real partners. When it comes to safety, everyone has a responsibility. We want everyone on the team. And let me again say, I have only the profoundest gratitude, on behalf of all the American people, and especially those who will be in airplanes in the future, to all those who are here with me today, and those whom they represent.

Thank you very much.

Federal Budget

Q. Mr. President, why are you dropping caps on the budget, which were so dear to you in the past?

The President. Well, first of all, the caps were literally completely shredded in the last budget by the majority in Congress. And so what I have to do now is to adopt an honest budget based on the spending levels that were adopted, in the reasonable expectation that inflation at least will be taken care of, particularly in defense. If you will remember, we had a big issue about how much the defense budget would be increased, but there were other increases, as well.

So you will see when my budget comes out that it still does everything I said we have to do. It invests more in education, science and technology, and other important areas. It protects the money necessary to take Social Security out beyond the life of the baby boom generation, to extend the life of Medicare, and very importantly, will still allow us to get out of debt, for the first time since 1835, over the next 15 years.

So all the budget objectives that I have—continuing to run the surpluses, getting the country out of debt, but continuing to invest in the things we need—will be met by the budget I present to Congress.

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

Q. Mr. President, on drugs—a pharmaceutical industry spokesman today did say that your plan is still unacceptable to them, and if you come back with the same plan, they'll still fight you on this. My question to you is, are you prepared to compromise with them? And what is your understanding—if their big objection is the danger of price caps not only on Medicare drugs, but that this could spill over to the commercial sector—

The President. Well, first of all, there's no danger of price caps. But what I think they're worried about is the fact that if the Government becomes a big buyer, that we'll be able to bargain for lower prices at greater volume. I don't think that's a bad thing.

You know, someone ought to ask them how they can possibly justify the fact that American senior citizens are now being carried across the border to Canada to buy drugs produced in America by American drug companies, with the help of public funds that have paid for research, with the availability of tax deductions for research and all of that, and Americans are going across the border in Canada and buying the same drugs for less than half of what they cost here.

So I think what they ought to do is come sit down with us and let's see if we can agree on a common approach. There may be a way that we can agree on an approach. That's why I was somewhat cautious in my remarks today.

I think it's a good thing that they recognize that it would be better if Medicare could provide this benefit, because we know 75 percent of our senior citizens and probably a higher percentage of our disabled people who need medications cannot afford what they need. And we know it can not only lengthen life and in many cases save lives, but it can also improve the quality of life.

So I think it's a very important issue. And I take their offer in a positive way and I just hope they'll come sit down with us and we'll try to sit down with them and with people in both parties in Congress who care about this, and see if we can't work out a common position that we can pass, because I think it's a very important issue.

Q. Do you think it's real, not a PR move on their part just to keep you from bashing them?

The President. I don't know. You know. I don't like to bash people. I never have done that as an option of first choice. And I'm not bashing them today. But I think that their big problem is that ordinary Americans now know that if they live close enough to the Canadian border, they could cross the border and buy a lot of drugs for half what they pay here, and in many other countries, even though the drugs are produced here by our

companies, and that any large producer will do the best—like in the private sector, try to get the best bargain they can.

But if there's some way to work through this, I'll be glad to sit down and make sure our people are available to them, and we'll try to work it out.

White House-Television Broadcaster Antidrug Efforts

Q. Mr. President, is it right to offer financial incentives to TV networks for incorporating antidrug messages into scripts? And are you inclined to try to seek similar incentives for other issues involving TV programming, like, say, gun violence?

The President. Well, first of all let me say, it is my understanding that what General McCaffrey was trying to do is to amplify the impact of the advertising program that we have been running—and keep in mind, a number of networks have agreed not only to take paid ads but have run a lot of our ads for free or reduced rates. And they are under an obligation to run public service announcements.

I think that General McCaffrey reached a conclusion based on how many people see public service announcements that are on late at night as opposed to primetime programming that more people watch, that if the networks were willing to put a good antidrug message in heavily watched programs, particularly by the most vulnerable young people, that would be a good thing. And it's my understanding that there's nothing mandatory about this, that there was no attempt to regulate content or tell people what they had to put into it—of course, I wouldn't support that. But I think he's done a very good job at increasing the sort of public interest component of what young people hear on the media, and I think it's working; we see drug use dropping.

And let me say, I've talked to a lot of people in the entertainment community who liked the idea that without compromising the integrity of their programs, they might be involved in all kinds of public service efforts. So that's where I am on this. This was his initiative, and I hadn't given any thought to the question of whether it might be applied in other ways, frankly.

Q. Do you think it's a deceptive move? It could be used for other messages in the future.

The President. Well, it could be. If the Government were writing the content, it could be. And I don't think we should be doing that. I think that—however, I think what General McCaffrey tried to do—which was to say, look, if you will do this, this can count against your obligation to run public service announcements which, as you know, are very often run in off hours and times when not many people are watching—I think this guy's intense and passionate and committed, and we've got too many kids using drugs, still. So I think that's what he was trying to do. I don't think there was any attempt to try to undermine the content or the independence or the integrity of the networks and the programming.

Airline Safety

Q. Mr. President, on aviation safety—the Europeans have been very successful not doing what you're announcing today, but downloading data from airplanes, analyzing hundreds of flights for patterns that could cause problems. We don't do that much in this country, because there's still a dispute between the airlines and the FAA over what would happen if this turned up some violations that could result in prosecutions. When are we going to get the kind of safety program they're using successfully in Europe to analyze data instead of pilot reports?

The President. Jane, you want to answer that?

FAA Administrator Jane F. Garvey. Thanks, Mr. President. Nice to see you, Matt. Well, first of all, as you know we're really looking at the whole issue of FOQA. We do have a policy in place which—the policy allows the information to be protected, which we think is very, very good. We've got a number of airlines who are working with us on that issue.

I think the real critical question is, when can we see that in an actual rule? And we are working that through the administration, and working very hard to see it in a rule-

making. I think it's absolutely the right direction. And certainly the combination of the information we can get from the flight data recorders, as well as the information we can get from the pilots or the mechanics, makes a very powerful tool. So I'm glad we have the policy in place, and we're moving toward the rulemaking.

The President. I'd like to make a general comment about this, and then we've got to go. I'm obviously not an expert in how airlines work, but I know quite a bit about production processes and manufacturing. It's something I've spent a lot of time studying over nearly 20 years now. It was a big part of the job I used to have when I was a Governor. And I can tell you that the kind of teamwork approach that has been announced today, in making people feel they won't be punished when they say they think there's something wrong or a mistake was made, was, in my judgment, the most significant factor leading all kinds of American manufacturers to a zero-defect approach, which had a major role in the resurgence of the manufacturing sector over the last decade and a major role in the comeback of the American economy.

So I believe that what they're doing here is very important. It is not rational to believe that what has worked so well in some other sector of our economy won't work just as well here. I think it's a great thing, and I thank them for doing it.

Michael Jordan

Q. Should Michael Jordan come to Washington?

The President. You bet. It will be fun. [Laughter] That's a no-brainer. [Laughter] Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. A reporter referred to former NBA Chicago Bull Michael Jordan, reported to be accepting a management position with the NBA Washington Wizards. Administrator Garvey referred to FOQA, Flight Operations Quality Assurance.

Proclamation 7267—Religious Freedom Day, 2000

January 14, 2000

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

On January 16, 1786, the Virginia legislature enacted a law whose impact is still felt around the world today. Authored by Thomas Jefferson and introduced by James Madison, this act affirmed religious freedom as one of the “natural rights of mankind” and pledged that none would “suffer on account of his religious opinions or beliefs.” Recognizing the fundamental importance of this right to human dignity, our founders modeled the First Amendment to our Constitution on the Virginia statute and made religious freedom and tolerance core values of our democracy. More than a century and half later, Eleanor Roosevelt, as the Chairperson of the U.N.’s Commission on Human Rights, worked to extend that vision to peoples around the world through her contributions to the U.N.’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Americans draw great strength from the free exercise of religion and from the diverse communities of faith that flourish in our Nation because of it. Our churches, mosques, synagogues, meetinghouses, and other places of worship bring us together, support our families, nourish our hearts and minds, and sustain our deepest values. Our religious beliefs give direction to our lives and provide moral guidance in the daily decisions we make.

Freedom of religion, however, still has enemies. In America in recent years, churches and synagogues have been destroyed by arson and people have been attacked because of their religious affiliation. Across the globe, many people still live in countries where the right of religious freedom is restricted or even prohibited. Some totalitarian and authoritarian regimes actively persecute those who seek to practice their religion, imprisoning, torturing, and even killing men and women because of their faith. Other governments monitor and harass religious minori-

ties, tolerating and even encouraging hostility or acts of violence against them.

My Administration is committed to safeguarding freedom of religion at home and promoting it around the globe. Federal, State, and local law enforcement officials are working in partnership to prosecute and prevent crimes aimed at people because of their religious affiliation, and I have called on the Congress to pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act to strengthen the Federal Government’s ability to combat such crimes. On the international front, we have made issues of religious liberty a consistent and fundamental part of our public diplomacy. My Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom and his staff have crisscrossed the globe, from China and Uzbekistan to Laos and Russia, to advance religious freedom and to assist those who are being persecuted for their beliefs. In accordance with the International Religious Freedom Act that I signed into law in 1998, the United States recently published the first annual report on the status of religious freedom worldwide and publicly designated the most severe international violators. This report highlights the many crucial efforts of individuals and agencies in the Federal Government to advocate religious freedom abroad, from negotiating with foreign heads of state to pursuing individual cases of persecution or discrimination.

As we observe Religious Freedom Day this year, let us give thanks for the wisdom of America’s founders in protecting our precious right to express our beliefs and practice our faith freely and openly. Let us resolve to be vigilant in defending that freedom and teaching tolerance in our homes, schools, communities, and workplaces. And let us continue to lead the world in assisting those who are persecuted because of their religious faith and in proclaiming the rights and dignity of every human being.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 16, 2000, as Religious Freedom Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs, and I urge all Americans to